

First Congregational United Church of Christ
February 5, 2023



Photo by Krystal Ng

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Ministers: All who are a part of this church

Pastor: Rev. Enno K. Limvere

Musician: Ben Nichols

Choir Director: Ann Russ

Peace Candle Lighter: Bruce Tyler

Liturgist: Nancy Giguere

Gathering Music

Words of Welcome

Prelude

Words to Enter Worship (Based on Psalm 139)

People who like ice-skating: O LORD, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

People who like ice-fishing: Where can I do from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

People who like ice cubes: If I take the winds of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

People who like cozy chairs inside: If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover, and the light around become night," even the darkness is not dark to you, the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you. Search me and know my heart; lead in the way everlasting.

Opening Hymn - Imago Dei (See Insert)

Refrain:

Imago Dei, Imago Dei, Born in the Image of God are w.

Imago Dei, Imago Dei, Called to Compassion; Born to be free.

1. How shall we live as images of God?
How best reflect the wonder of our maker?
Humbly we will walk, with mercy respond and know the
Essence of Love is always with us

Refrain

2. How shall we love the neighbor filled with greed?
How best respond to those consumed by hatred?
Look beyond the fear that keeps them from knowing the
Abundance of Love that's always with us.

Refrain

3. Then shall we see the images of Christ.
Then shall we know that God is in our neighbor.
Humbly we will walk, with mercy respond and know the
Essence of Love is always with us.

Refrain

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Words of Lament

Almighty and Merciful God, we hear we are created in your image but we find too many faults and weaknesses in ourselves and each other. We are told that we are salt and light and leaven, but our courage fails and our efforts often fall short. Renew us, O God, with strength and purpose. Raise us up on eagle's wings so we may have saltiness and brighten up the world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Time of Silence

Words for Blessing the Earth – All the Earth Belongs to God by Amanda Udis-Kessler

One: All the earth belongs to God so we must love the earth. All the earth belongs to God so we must tend the earth for all God's creatures to enjoy.

Many: We must repair and not destroy. All the earth belongs to God so we must save the earth.

All: Every creature is God's own, we must love each one. Only when the world is whole will love's whole will be done.

One: Until that day we turn our hands to sacred work that love demands. Joining in the holy care that others have begun.

Many: Earth itself cries out in pain and suffering abounds: floods and fires, heat and cold, the land is burned and drowned. We must act now. We cannot wait.

All: The earth is God's and there's enough. Now we must live in faith and trust and sow a healing seed.

Words of Poetry & Lighting the Candle of Peace

It is a custom in our congregation to light our Peace Candle during worship, as a witness to the Prince of Peace and our communal intention to be peace-makers as a Just Peace Church.

*Light by
Rabindranath Tagore*

*Light, my light, the world-filling light,
the eye-kissing light,
heart-sweetening light!*

*Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the center of my life;
the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love;
the sky opens, the wind runs wild, laughter passes over the earth.*

*The butterflies spread their sails on the sea of light.
Lilies and jasmines surge up on the crest of the waves of light.*

*The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling,
and it scatters gems in profusion.*

*Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling,
and gladness without measure.*

*The heaven's river has drowned its banks
and the flood of joy is abroad.*

Passing of the Peace

Hymn #177 God of Change and Glory

1. God of change and glory, God of time and space,
When we fear the future, give to us your grace
In the midst of changing ways give us still the grace to praise.

Refrain:

Many gifts, one Spirit, one love known in many ways
In our difference is blessing, from diversity we praise
One Giver, one Word, one Spirit, one God known in many ways,
Hallowing our days.
For the Giver, for the gifts, we praise, praise, praise!

2. God of many colors, God of many signs,
You have made us different, blessings many kinds.
As the old ways disappear, let your love cast out our fear.

Refrain:

3. Freshness of the morning, newness of each night,
You are still creating endless love and light.
This we see, as a shadows part, many gifts from one great heart

Refrain

Scripture Readings

1st Scripture Isaiah 58:1-9a (Common English Bible)

Shout loudly; don't hold back; raise your voice like a trumpet!

Announce to my people their crime to the house of Jacob their sins.

² They seek me day after day desiring knowledge of my way like a nation that acted righteously, that didn't abandon their God.

They ask me for righteous judgments, wanting to be close to God.

³ "Why do we fast and you don't see; why afflict ourselves and you don't notice?"

Yet on your fast day you do whatever you want, and oppress all your workers.

⁴ You quarrel and brawl, and then you fast; you hit each other violently with your fists.

You shouldn't fast as you are doing today if you want to make your voice heard on high.

⁵ Is this the kind of fast I choose, a day of self-affliction, of bending one's head like a reed and of lying down in mourning clothing and ashes?

Is this what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

⁶ Isn't this the fast I choose: releasing wicked restraints, untying the ropes of a yoke,

setting free the mistreated, and breaking every yoke?

⁷ Isn't it sharing your bread with the hungry and bringing the homeless poor into your house, covering the naked when you see them, and not hiding from your own family?

⁸ Then your light will break out like the dawn, and you will be healed quickly.

Your own righteousness will walk before you, and the LORD's glory will be your rear guard. ⁹ Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and God will say, "I'm here."

2nd Scripture Matthew 5:13-20 (The Message)

¹³ "Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.

¹⁴⁻¹⁶ "Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ "Don't suppose for a minute that I have come to demolish the Scriptures—either God's Law or the Prophets. I'm not here to demolish but to complete. I am going to put it all together, pull it all together in a vast panorama. God's Law is more real and lasting than the stars in the sky and the ground at your feet. Long after stars burn out and earth wears out, God's Law will be alive and working.

¹⁹⁻²⁰ "Trivialize even the smallest item in God's Law and you will only have trivialized yourself. But take it seriously, show the way for others, and you will find honor in the kingdom. Unless you do far better than the Pharisees in the matters of right living, you won't know the first thing about entering the kingdom.

Children's Message Bland and Hidden

Choir Anthem

Message Salt and Light

Musical Reflections

Joys and Concerns, Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Our Father, Mother God, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen

News of God at Work in our Congregation & Community

Our Time of Giving

Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

*Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen*

Closing Hymn # 181 You Are the Salt for the Earth, O People

1. You are salt for the earth, O people; salt for the reign of God!
Share the flavor of life, O people; life in the City of God!

Refrain

Bring forth the reign of mercy, bring forth the reign of peace;
Bring forth the reign of justice, bring forth the City of God!

2. You are a light on the hill, O people: light for the City of God!
Shine so holy and bright, O people: shine for the City of God!

Refrain

3. You are a seed of the Word, O people: bring forth the reign of God!
Seeds of mercy and seeds of justice, grow in the City of God!

Refrain

4. We are a blessed and a pilgrim people: bound for the reign of God!
Love our journey and love our homeland: love is the City of God!

Refrain

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Benediction

Sending Music